

VZCZCXRO3868  
RR RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHEK #1268/01 2411126  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 291126Z AUG 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8061  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1161  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0293  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2107  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1487  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001268

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [UZ](#) [KG](#)  
SUBJECT: KYRGYZ-UZBEK RELATIONS CONTINUING TO THAW

REF: A. BISHKEK 1226  
    [1](#)B. BISHKEK 1159  
    [1](#)C. BISHKEK 1109

BISHKEK 00001268 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Continuing the trend of the past two months (Ref C), Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations appear to be slowly warming. Foreign Minister Jekshenkulov reported progress from his August 24-25 trip to Tashkent in the areas of visa reform and border delimitation, and he was hopeful that Uzbekistan would not raise gas prices substantially this winter. The president's foreign policy advisor was less optimistic that progress would be made on either issue when President Bakiyev travels to Tashkent, possibly in late September or October. Neither official had any information on the reported disappearances of Uzbek asylum seekers from Kyrgyzstan (Ref A), although many suspect that disappearances are evidence of increased security cooperation between the two countries. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) In an August 28 meeting, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Alikbek Jekshenkulov provided Ambassador an upbeat assessment of his August 24-25 working visit to Tashkent. He went to Tashkent to prepare for President Bakiyev's upcoming visit, which he said was tentatively set for September 29-30. Economic issues remained the biggest problem between the two countries, but he said there had been progress on visas, border delimitation issues, and gas. He said that the two sides had agreed on a text for suspending visa requirements for travel between the two countries for up to 60 days. (NOTE: Currently, only citizens resident in designated border areas are allowed visa-free travel for up to five days. END NOTE.) He also said that there would be an agreement resolving most border issues between the countries. Jekshenkulov said that gas prices would rise from the current USD 55/Mcm to perhaps USD 70 or more, but not the doubling of prices mentioned in the press, which he said was an attempt to "scare" the Kyrgyz. He also said he had had good discussions on participation in regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Community.

13. (C) Presidential foreign policy advisor Ermek Ibraimov was less positive in his assessment of progress on issues between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In a separate August 28 meeting, he told the Ambassador that with the Uzbeks, there were always difficult political issues. He said that no dates had been agreed for the President's visit to Tashkent, although he hoped the visit could take place in October. He did not expect progress on changing the visa regime between the countries. He said the Uzbek Government was pressuring the Kyrgyz to sign a border agreement covering most of the border, but leaving small areas undecided. Ibraimov said that the Kyrgyz would not sign an agreement until all disputed areas were delimited, because of the threat from the "crawling expansion" of the Uzbek population in those areas. Ibraimov said the issues surrounding gas deliveries were not economic, but were political, and he raised the concern that the Uzbeks would use gas this winter to put pressure on the Kyrgyz Government.

14. (C) Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Alisher Salakhitdinov, told the Ambassador August 26 that no date had been set for the presidential visit, but it might occur in October. He thought that the visa regime was the most important current issue, and he favored the proposal for 60-day visa-free travel between the countries. He also reported that while the issue of raising the price of gas had not been on the table during Jekshenkulov's visit, the real issues were the volume and timing of deliveries, not the price.

15. (C) Neither Jekshenkulov nor Ibraimov could shed any light on the recent reported disappearances of Uzbek refugees and asylum seekers from Osh (Ref A). While agreeing that the matter needed to be investigated, Jekshenkulov said he had only incomplete information from the mass media, and he

BISHKEK 00001268 002.2 OF 002

speculated that the disappearances could be connected to corruption within the law enforcement agencies or to religious extremists in the area. Ibraimov said he had inquired into the reports, but he had no additional information. He wondered if the Uzbeks had not returned home voluntarily, given the strong familial ties Uzbeks feel toward their neighborhood institutions, or mahallas.

16. (C) COMMENT: Neither Kyrgyz Government official offered much on the most widely noted areas of cooperation between the two countries: security and anti-terrorism. Many believe that the disappearance of asylum seekers (Ref A) and the refoulement of registered refugees (Ref B) from Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan are evidence of increased security cooperation -- as well as a "gift" to Karimov to set the stage for Bakiyev's visit, whenever it takes place. END COMMENT.  
YOVANOVITCH